



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

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TROUT HEADED FOR BANNER LAKES JANUARY 12

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will stock an estimated 1,400 catchable sized trout at Banner Lakes at Summerset State Park, north of Indianola, around 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 12. This is the last of the fall and winter trout stockings at the 59-acre lake.

The trout are from the Big Springs hatchery near Elkader. Banner Lakes at Summerset State Park is the only central Iowa trout fishery.

Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase the trout privilege for \$11 in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

WINTER BECOMING AN OUTDOORS WOMAN WORKSHOP RETURNS IN FEBRUARY

DES MOINES -- The Iowa Becoming an Outdoors Woman program is bringing back one of its most popular events - the winter workshop.

The one-day event will be held Feb. 5 in Clear Lake at the Tanglefoot Girl Scout Camp on the south shore of Clear Lake.

Participants will choose one of four different sessions in the morning and one of four sessions in the afternoon. Session topics include cross country skiing, ice fishing, turkey hunting, falconry, fly tying, snowshoeing, winter survival/orienteering and game care and cooking. The \$50 registration includes class instruction and materials, and a continental breakfast, lunch and snack.

Becoming an Outdoors Woman is an international program aimed primarily at women, but is an opportunity for anyone 18 years or older to learn outdoor skills usually associated with hunting and fishing, but useful for many outdoor pursuits.

For more information and to download a registration form, visit www.iowadnr.com and click on Becoming an Outdoors Woman under “Reminders/News,” or contact Julie Sparks at 515-281-6159 or julie.sparks@dnr.state.ia.us

TREES AND SHRUBS VITAL TO WILDLIFE WINTER SURVIVAL

AMES -- With the typical Iowa winter of subzero temperatures and strong northerly winds, the benefits of trees and woody shrubs to wildlife and songbirds can not be overemphasized, according to Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau chief John Walkowiak.

Trees, especially conifers, provide critical winter cover for many of Iowa’s game and nongame species. If densely planted, conifer trees act as “wildlife hotels” by greatly reducing wind chill temperatures and allowing wildlife to conserve their body heat. In addition, conifers allow wildlife hiding cover from predators. Conifers ideally suited to Iowa’s growing conditions are red cedar, white pine, red pine, jack pine, Norway spruce and white spruce.

Broadleaf shrubs and small trees with dense low hanging branches also provide winter cover for wildlife and provide winter food sources. Shrubs and small trees such as serviceberry, the dogwoods, chokecherry, wild plum, elderberry, arrowwood, nannyberry, buttonbush and highbush cranberry are excellent choices for Iowa wildlife. As the snow becomes deeper and blows into drifts, upright woody vegetation continues to provide winter food, browse, and cover which is often critical to wildlife winter survival.

To provide winter cover in future years, trees and shrub species can be planted this spring. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Forest Nursery sells trees and shrubs for wildlife plantings. The price is \$0.25 to \$0.45 per seedling with a minimum order of 500 seedlings. For smaller scale plantings, the 20 seedling Songbird packet is available at \$20 and various 200 seedling wildlife habitat packets are available at \$90.

To order seedlings or for more information, call the nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or connect to www.iowatreeplanting.com.

TRUMPETER SWANS ON THE MOVE

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

With a quick lunge, he made his move. Twenty pounds of muscle and feathers could not escape. As Dave Hoffman stood up, an upset trumpeter swan flapped and flailed in his arms. The disagreement did not last long. Even as Hoffman walked a few yards to his vehicle, the six-month old swan calmed down, though it’s long neck

stretched to the sky, looking for an escape route. Hoffman folded the big gray-white cygnet into a portable pet carrier and went back for more.

Five young swans met the same fate this day; siblings hatched and raised on the enclosed pond at the Grotto of the Redemption at West Bend. Their parents; about five pounds heavier and bearing the trademark snow white plumage are “residents” here. The female, one of the oldest in Iowa, has been there since 1992. Her mate has been on site for about five years. Neither can fly, so they call the half-acre pond home. Each year they raise a brood, helping fuel the trumpeter swan recovery across Iowa.

Trumpeters, with their regal bearing and French horn-like calls, dotted Iowa wetlands, until European settlement drove off most of them. Unrestricted market hunting nearly finished the job. Like many other species, trumpeters were extirpated from Iowa and most of the U.S. In the mid-20th century, their *known* population was just 69 in the “lower 48.” In the past twenty years or so, their restoration has been supported by conservationists, landowners and wildlife agencies; a link underscoring the value of wetlands for wildlife habitat and water quality.

“They will be banded and moved over to Nora Springs for the winter,” explains Hoffman, a wildlife biologist with the Department of Natural Resources. “They will be released into the wild next spring here in north central Iowa.” The young birds, which had their wings clipped once over the summer, got another trim before they left West Bend. As new flight feathers grow in, the swans will take to the skies. And *that* first flight area...not the crowded grotto pond...will be imprinted on them as their home territory.

Before they left, though, the young swans received some up close admiration from grade school kids. Some walked over from the adjacent parochial school. A busload of West Bend-Mallard students rolled up, too.

“It was really soft, and it felt weird,” offered 11 year old Jacob Umsted. He and other classmates had a chance to pet the swan as Hoffman held on firmly and told them, about the largest North American waterfowl. “It was trying to bite me and stuff. It almost did,” laughed Umsted, recalling the bird’s eight-foot wingspan and repeating a couple other ‘swan facts’ from the outdoor classroom. “It was really soft,” pointed out eight-year-old Emily Bormann. “It kind of felt like a whole bunch of piles of feathers.”

In the meantime, the swans’ new home...and about a dozen others across Iowa...host a variety of soon-to-be-wild trumpeters. Some are on public areas, with DNR staff feeding and monitoring them. Others rely on private cooperators, with supplies from the DNR and the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Fund. Each area has open water and is fenced to keep predators away from the flightless birds.

The private cooperators are the key to success of the swan restoration. “We have released about 570 (swans) into the wild, in hopes of building a wild, free flying population,” explains Hoffman. “We appreciate the Grotto here and others across Iowa,

for cooperating and raising these cygnets.”

And the results are starting to show. “We had about 15 nests in the wild this past year,” records Hoffman. “They are spread out from the Mississippi River over to Loess Hills State Forest. We also have some around Spirit Lake, so they’re spread all around the state. There are also Iowa swans nesting in Minnesota, Wisconsin. We also have confirmed tracking (of migratory birds) in 15 states and two provinces in Canada. A swan that hatched here at the Grotto, for example, traveled all the way to Lubbock, Texas.”

For every Grotto swan, viewed by thousands of visitors, there is another facing the elements in the wild, slowly expanding the range of these special waterfowl. The head start provided by supporters here and throughout the upper Midwest ensure those wide, webbed feet have good footing in that battle.

Restoration Fund Aids Big Birds

With a network of volunteers, the trumpeter swan has taken wing, literally, over the last decade in Iowa. The Iowa Wildlife Federation maintains a trust fund, utilized by the DNR to purchase birds, feed and supplies. All contributions go directly to the swans. Trumpeter Swan Fund, c/o Iowa Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 3332, Des Moines, Iowa 50316.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of January 4, 2005

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Ice fishing reports will be released every week while quality ice conditions exist.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing has been good in deeper water off of Big Stoney Point, the west side and the north end. Minnows or minnow heads on jigging type baits are catching fish. A few perch are being caught off Crandall's Beach, Marble Beach and off the foot bridge. Teardrops tipped with waxworms or small spoons tipped with perch eyes or minnow heads will work. Crappies are being caught in Templar Lagoon and off the North Grade. Look for the lily pads on the Grade for the most consistent action. Bluegills are being caught on the North Grade using teardrops tipped with waxworms.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Perch fishing has been sporadic. Look for deep weedlines or flats for best results in the bays for best results. Some nice walleye are being caught in Smith's Bay in the evenings. Crappies are being caught in the canals using minnows or waxworms. Bluegills are being caught in Emerson and Miller's bays using waxworms on a teardrop.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Some nice walleyes are being caught off the boat ramp and around the island.

Center Lake (Dickinson): A few walleyes and crappies are being caught in front of the north boat ramp.

Silver Lake (Palo Alto): A few nice perch are being caught.

Trumbull Lake (Clay): Yellow perch fishing has slowed down.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): Lots of small panfish are being caught on small teardrops with wax worms or wigglers. Find one of the many brush piles that hold fish.

Dog Creek (O'Brien): Some small crappie and yellow perch are being caught.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Fishing is fair to good for walleyes in the evening. Don't forget the 15-inch length limit.

Arrowhead Lake (Sac): Bluegill fishing is fair to good around structures.

Little Clear Lake (Pocahontas): Yellow perch fishing is fair to good.

Brushy Creek (Webster): The main body of the lake is frozen BUT, ice is very thin. The north boat ramp area ice is 4 to 5 inches thick. Weather forecast is for warm weather. Use extreme caution on the lake. A few walleyes are being caught with minnows, and some bluegills are hitting on wax worms.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Ice thickness is running 10 to 14 inches over most of the lake. Walleye fishing is fair. Jigging spoons and minnows are both producing fish. Fish the sunrise or sunset times for best success. Remember, there is a 14-inch minimum length limit. Yellow bass are being caught northeast of the Island, Farmer's Beach and Billy's Reef. Small spoons and minnows are producing the best. White bass are also being caught in the same areas.

Upper Pine (Hardin): Bluegill fishing is good using waxworms and small jigs.

Lake Catherine (Winnebago): Bluegills are being caught on small jigs and waxworms. Fish are running 6 to 8 inches. Late afternoon offers the best action.

Silver Lake (Worth): Yellow perch fishing is good around the jetty and the campground area using minnows. Sorting is required, but fish in the 7- to 9-inch range are available.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Ice conditions have been variable, from 6 inches of ice on farm ponds to 4 inches on small lakes. However, some of the larger lakes just froze late last week and it is strongly advised to remain cautious and to test the ice before venturing out.

Southwest Iowa Farm Ponds: Excellent for panfish on wax worms with safe ice conditions. Ice thickness varies from 6 to 9 inches.

Big Creek (Polk): Bluegill fishing is reported to be good during the day using tear-drops and wax worms in the Lost Lake area near the spillway. Crappie fishing has been good late in the day in the Lost Lake area using rocker jigs and minnows.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and redear fishing has been fair to good using jigs or hooks with worms and wax worms.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been fair using wax worms and jigs.

Hickory Grove (Story): Bluegill fishing is fair using small jigs/hooks and wax worms.

Easter Lake (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been fair with jigs and wax worms, although there are a number of smaller fish being caught. Crappie fishing has been fair with jigs and minnows.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Fishing is excellent for bluegills of all sizes. Crappies are fair tipping a jig with a minnow. Ice conditions are 7 to 9 inches.

Littlefield (Audubon): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair on wax worms. Ice conditions are 7 to 9 inches.

With the warmer temperatures this past week, most of the lakes in Union, Clarke, Decatur, Adams, and Ringgold counties have open water areas and questionable ice quality.

Three Mile (Union): Reports some fishing activity this week, but found some open water areas. Check ice quality frequently.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Ice conditions across southeast Iowa are **UNSAFE** and ice fishing is not recommended.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Ice conditions have deteriorated on some sections of the Mississippi River. Use extreme caution—especially near the shoreline or in any area where current may exist. Despite recent rainfall, good ice conditions continue on Pools 9 to 11. In Pool 9, crappie fishing is improving and anglers are catching decent bluegills in Cordwood and Fish Lake. In Pool 10, anglers are reporting better fishing in Joyce Lake, with slower fishing near Noble's Island. On lower Pool 10, fishing pressure has increased in Norwegian Lake and Methodist Slough with good reports on bluegill fishing an occasional crappie. Bluegill fishing has slowed a bit in Bussey Lake (Pool 10), but anglers are doing well on tip-ups for northern pike. Anglers are also reporting good tip-up fishing in Hog Slough (Pool 10). There is very little tailwater fishing pressure for walleye or sauger. Boat anglers can still access the tailwater area at Guttenberg by using the new boat ramp at the DNR office. Ice conditions in Pools 12 to 15 are poor with ice having a honeycomb effect. Although ice thickness ranges from 2 to 8 inches, angling is not recommended under these conditions and anglers are encouraged to wait for colder temperatures.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Bluegill fishing is excellent with some fish in the 8 to 10-inch range. Fish near the point in 7 to 10 feet of water for best results. An occasional nice crappie is also being taken.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Bluegill fishing is fair. Fish the west side of the lake for the most success.

Ice fishing is beginning to pick up in Black Hawk County lakes for bluegill and crappie.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-926-3276.

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